
THE AMERICAN
NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 5. Vol. XV.)

MAY, 1841.

(WHOLE No. 173.)

SERMON CCXCIX.

BY REV. WILLIAM ADAMS,
PASTOR OF THE CENTRAL PRESB. CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

**Delivered on the Sabbath after the
DECEASE OF THE LATE PRESIDENT HARRISON.**

*"Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils : for wherein is
he to be accounted of?"* Isaiah, 2 : 22.

The believer in a superintending Providence, who presides over all the affairs of men, can find no apology for inattention to passing events. Conduct so indeavour, is rebuked alike by reason and Scripture. No knowledge is so practical and important to ourselves as the knowledge of God. But how is this to be acquired? Are not his *acts* the best exponents of his character? Are not the dealings of his Providence his own living voice, with which he speaks to the children of men, in language distinct and audible? The utmost modesty, I know, becomes a being of yesterday, when attempting to scan the ways of Him whose counsels are a great deep. Stretching over so large a space, and requiring the whole of time for its completion, many parts of the great plan of Providence must remain inscrutable and mysterious to our mortal vision. They are like the many springs and wheels of an involved and intricate mechanism; seemingly they work adverse one to another, but when the result comes out, the harmony of the whole will be seen. It is but a part of God's ways which we see; and the adaptation of one event to another, on a vast scale, and the fitness of all events to a final end, can be made clear only when the whole plan is completed.

It is plain, therefore, that the dealings of Providence never can supersede the necessity of a written revelation, as a method of human instruction. These are too involved and incomprehensible to be a guide unto the simple. Seemingly discordant and irreconcilable, by themselves, they would often confound the wisdom of the wisest, and perplex the mind of the most studious and saga-

cious. Observe, accordingly, the fallacious construction which men, unenlightened by revelation, have put upon passing events to their own bewildering and distress; perverting, oftentimes, the mysteries of Providence into the service of error and superstition. It is the Scriptures of God which alone are capable of interpreting aright the movements of Providence. God cannot deny or contradict himself. It is his word which explains his Providence—it is his Providence which illustrates and confirms his word. Whatever appears dark and adverse in outward events, religion teaches us to resolve into the wisdom of Him who seeth the end from the beginning, and who out of seeming evil evolveth good; while, in return, the dispensations of Providence paint to the eye and trumpet to the ear of man, those various lessons of piety which, when taught in other forms, often fail to affect him. Hence it generally occurs, that deeper impressions and more powerful effects are produced, when the declarations of God concerning the vanity of all things human are repeated in the solemn tones of afflictive events, than when read on the printed page, or heard in the calm retreats of the sanctuary.

The rational faculties attain to their best exercise when removed as far as possible from things sensible, into the region of the abstract and spiritual; but the *heart* of man feels the most acutely, when, withdrawing from things remote, it is made to bear the pressure of things near, visible and tangible. When thus stricken by the hand of God, and full of sorrowful experience, the voice of man is no farther needed, except it be to interpret Providence, and guide the emotions already excited in consonance with religion.

You have already anticipated, my brethren, the application of these remarks to that recent dispensation of Divine Providence by which God is to-day speaking to this whole people; the aspects and relations of which are so public and prominent, that not to observe them would betray the most criminal levity. For the first time since the organization of our civil government, its chief executive officer has been removed by death. That is a novel experience through which this nation is now passing. Never before have we been taught, after this manner, the nearness of that relation which connects each and every citizen in our land with the man who is elevated to preside over its affairs. Observation has misled me, if it be not true, that this event has developed a beauty and a power in this feature of our government which before was never even suspected. Our red brethren in the West have always been accustomed to designate the President of the United States as their "Great Father." It is a title far above that of king or emperor. Amid the asperities of political excitement, and the collisions of party feeling, men have scarcely thought of any such relation; but when death has come to sunder the tie, a whole people is visited with a sorrow, in some respects, not unlike that which

children feel when bereaved of a parent. Men are actually surprised to find themselves thus affected. In their animated desire to elevate favorite candidates to the chair of chief authority, they had not even thought that there was, in every bosom, a latent feeling of personal relation to that office itself, which, in an event like that which has now occurred, would create a common sympathy superior to sectional preferences and party animosity.

My motives, in alluding thus distinctly to this mournful event, cannot be misconstrued by those who will testify that this sacred desk was never prostituted to the purposes of party. The ministers of religion are called to a higher vocation than to indulge in political speculations, or supply fuel for political excitement. Leaving it for others to discuss what are to be the probable effects of this unexpected providence on our civil affairs, it will be my province, as a teacher of religion, to present those aspects of the event which are consonant with the instructions of the holy Sabbath.

1. I cannot but think that this dispensation of Providence was designed to teach this people the vanity of *human dependence*. It has pleased God to accomplish most of his purposes on earth by human instruments. Now it is one of the most common modes in which the natural atheism of the human heart develops itself, that there should be so prevalent a disposition to deny the agency of the Supreme, and confide entirely in an arm of flesh. It is so in the family. Children hang upon a father, and think scarcely at all of that higher hand on which he himself and they depend. So it is in the church. There has ever been a proneness to trust in favorite men and measures, forgetful of her entire dependence on her invisible Lord and Head. Pre-eminently so is it with the state. It is frightful to think what an amount of atheism there is in reference to civil affairs. More confidence is felt and expressed in the wisdom of man than in the all-wise and powerful agency of God. The sagacity of rulers, the skill and experience of governors, the prudence of legislators, the wisdom of cabinets; in short, the agency of man in some form occupies a place, in the thoughts of man, far above all sense of dependence on Him, who, from on high, declares "counsel is mine and sound wisdom: by me kings reign, and princes decree justice; by me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth."

To cease from this dependence on men and to trust in God only, while it is the first lesson of piety, is one of the most difficult of all attainments. Therefore it is that God employs violent measures to aid its accomplishment. Intending that men should devoutly recognize his superintending authority, he breaks down and casts aside the instruments which have been made to occupy his place. He enters the domestic circle, and removes the "strong staff" on which many lean, that wounded hearts

may turn to Him and put their trust in Him only. He visits his church, and selecting those who are as the pillars of the house of God, to whom Zion looks as to her great strength, puts them in the grave that He may be exalted, and in him alone may his people trust. In like manner he invades the nation which has grown unmindful of him, frustrates its wisest counsels, disappoints its most sagacious anticipations, and removes its chosen helpers.

Let it not be set down as an arrogant and presumptuous attempt to interpret the providence of God, when I remark, that (if a disposition to trust in ourselves characterizes us as a people,) then there has been a series of remarkable events in our recent history which appear to have been designed expressly for its rebuke and correction. I look back to a period less than ten years ago, and recount the consternation which pervaded this city,

“ —When the blessed seals
“ Which close the pestilence were broke;”

and thousands were withering, in a moment, before the breath of the great destroyer. Emphatically walking in darkness, as it did, evading the researches of science after its causes and its cure, it would seem that God intended that this visitation should be resolved into his own immediate agency, thereby teaching men their entire dependence on him for life, and breath, and all things. Did that religious feeling extend, and was it perpetuated as designed? Was God recognized and adored in this terrible event as he should have been? A short interval elapsed, and the scourge again returned. Was it productive of the intended effect? Or was there an abounding atheism which provoked the displeasure of heaven? Not many months passed away and the hand of God was again visible in another form. The devouring element, gaining ascendancy over man, consumed, in a single night, millions upon millions of wealth. A spectator of that terrible scene myself, and an observer of the dismay which, for a season, existed, I confess to you that the impression made on my mind of the criminal inattention to the hand of God, and the indomitable spirit of self-confidence and self-dependence which almost universally prevailed, is even now as painfully distinct in my recollection as are the terrors of that eventful night. It was hard to humble ourselves under the hand of God; and the elasticity of a self-confident spirit threw off the pressure, and went forth again in its own strength. Again did God assert his own supremacy, and bring to nought the counsels of the wise. Unexampled embarrassments perplexed all mercantile affairs, and men's hearts failed them from looking for the things which were to come to pass. And again it was hard to discern the agency of God in all this, and devoutly to recognize our constant dependence on him for stability of purpose and cer-

tainty of success in the marts of business, in the relations of credit, and in the paths of the sea. Again was the spirit of self-confidence permitted to develop itself, we fear, with too much of a real disregard to the voice and providence of God. Various measures for relief were proposed and urged; divers opinions advanced; parties were formed; favorite schemes discussed; some looked to the right hand, and some to the left; some to this man, and others to that; but few, we fear, looked upward to Him from whom help cometh. And now, when the utmost wishes and hopes of the majority were accomplished, I hear a voice from heaven, saying, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; put not your trust in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the Lord God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is."

The agency of God in the affairs of nations is as real as in the concerns of individuals, and never does a nation attain unto His favor, till this supreme authority is devoutly recognized in all that pertains to internal economy, to foreign relations, to the pursuits of business, and the enactment of laws. That people whom God intends to bless he will afflict, till every human dependence be forsaken, and the lesson be learned and practised, of an habitual acknowledgment of his presence, a strong confidence in his arm, and a careful obedience unto his commandments.

2. The tendency of that event we are now considering, I observe, in the next place, must be to rebuke and allay a prevailing *spirit of party*.

No one has been a calm observer of recent events without experiencing many sad regrets in view of the prevalence of this great evil, and many forebodings in reference to its probable issue. Am I required to define the lawful limits of party preferences, and demonstrate in what cases it is excessive and disastrous? I have only to reply in a word,—that spirit of party is evil, and only evil, which is superior to the claims of pure patriotism, and the expression of which is allied to passions selfish, vile and corrupt. It has been urged by some, as a serious objection to the morality of the New Testament, that it omits to inculcate patriotism as a specific virtue. How groundless the objection is will appear, when we consider that patriotism is included within the great law of love, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, and thy neighbor as thyself;" and that to have insisted on the practice of patriotism by itself might have been to erect that into an independent feeling, separate from the universal claims of Christianity; a feeling which when thus divorced is always prone, as history proves, to be excessive and ruinous.

Against life, and interest, and excitement even in relation to national affairs, religion has nothing to object; but a truly

patriotic heart, animated by pure motives, swelling only with virtuous emotions, can bear to be heated through and through without the ebullition of one angry or sinful feeling. Compared with this rule of love, how alarmingly prevalent have been the evils of a party spirit. How much that was truthless; how much that was selfish; how much that was unkind; how much that was angry, alas! how much has been said and done, the whole spirit of which was opposed to the love of country and to the love of God. And now, when brethren of the same household, citizens of the same country, were well nigh intoxicated with this feeling; when all was eagerness and excitement, a ghastly figure enters the arena—it is DEATH! He waves his skeleton arm, and all is still. What instructor is so impressive concerning the folly of strife as this speechless messenger! Did you ever stand by the grave of one against whom you had in life been at enmity? Was it not with a compunction of conscience that you looked down on the poor, helpless remnant of mortality, wondering how you could ever have quarrelled with a worm of the dust like yourself? How mean, how worthless, how unworthy appear those objects which party feeling has presented, in comparison with the sublime realities which death forces on the attention. What a great calm it brings over the agitated spirits of men. How it hushes noise—how it subdues excitement. I thank God that there are so many proofs that, before his own providence, party spirit has fallen prostrate, and that, in the presence of death, men are made to feel that they are brethren still. Let us hope that this effect may not be temporary or limited; but that a more conciliatory spirit, a spirit more consonant with the providences and word of God, may pervade the future counsels and conduct of this whole people.

3. Again, I observe that this dispensation of Providence was obviously intended to teach us the vanity of the world, the certainty of death, and the nearness of eternity.

In some respects the death of a king and a beggar are alike. The pains of dissolution are the same. The impotence of human aid are alike apparent. But in the effects produced on others by the decease of those whose circumstances are so dissimilar there is a difference. When death enters the cottage of the humble man, he teaches the sad lesson of human frailty but to few. When he invades a circle of wider relations, louder and more impressive are his monitions. But when, as now, he removes in an hour the most exalted in rank, God speaks therein unto a whole nation at once, saying, "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The breath of man is in his nostrils, and wherein is he to be accounted of, at his best estate, but a frail, helpless, dying creature." If death sometimes assumes the air of friendship, and is greeted with a melancholy welcome when he comes to the relief of the abject and the forlorn, true and terrible is his aspect to the eye of mortals, when he dims the lustre of rank, humbles the

power and quenches the glory of life. Now is it that the world is taught, in a manner most impressive, that there is no exemption from the decree and power of the king of terrors. The lofty and the lowly, the rich and the poor, lie down together under his silent dominion.

It would be difficult to conceive of any combination of circumstances better adapted to impress a people with the vanity of all things earthly, than those in which death has now achieved his conquest. The individual who has fallen, occupied the very pinnacle of society. He had attained the utmost that a lawful ambition could desire; and while his glory was yet fresh upon him, the destroyer came. Scarcely had the intelligence of his official installation reached our remoter States, ere his earthly career was finished, and his soul summoned to the bar of God. We look back a little more than a month ago, and read again the records of that day, and survey the scene of splendor and of joy, and hear the shouts of a great multitude; and while we look and listen, already it has faded away like a dream. Instead of a shout, is the dirge; instead of the joyous procession, is the funeral train, the bier, and the urn. The shadow of death has passed upon it all. Who can behold the contrast without feeling how vain, how empty, how evanescent the highest honors which the world can give! What a lesson is conveyed by this event, especially to those who are high in office, and who, from the very influences which beset them, may be supposed to be most in danger of putting far away the thought of their own mortality!

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,

"And all that beauty, all that wealth ere gave,

"Await alike the inevitable hour;

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

God is speaking unto this nation, that it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death cometh the judgment! Eternity, with its amazing realities, is very near. Very soon and the vast throng which yesterday moved through these streets, will, without exception, have passed beyond the scenes which now occupy them, into eternity. What then will be to us the honors or the obscurities of life? What to him, who is now engrossed in the solemn concerns of the eternal world, is the voice of eulogy—the solemn pageant, and these habiliments of mourning? Nothing are these to an immortal spirit. All, all on earth is shadow—that beyond is *substance*. And are no religious impressions to follow this public bereavement? Is it not a moment in which it may be expected that the thoughts of a whole nation would be turned to the life which is to come? Is the feeling which Providence has awakened to expend itself in forms and ceremonies? or is it destined to introduce and extend a more serious attention to eternal things, and a more general practice of devout piety? Fortunate for his own fame as was the time of death with this distinguished individual, thrice fortu-

nate will it prove if it shall appear to have been the means of conferring religious blessings on his countrymen. Should his untimely death be instrumental of giving a direction to the thoughts of this nation towards the truths of religion, greater benefits would thereby result, than could have followed the most prosperous administration of affairs.

4. There is one circumstance in connection with death which is very striking. It is the deep interest which is felt by survivors in the *moral character* of the departed. There is an eager inquisitiveness after the evidences of his preparation for death. There is an anxiety to know what was the conduct of the individual as he approached the confines of eternity. Did he show himself a christian? Did he express himself as being ready for the summons? Did he leave testimony that it was all well with his soul? This remarkable fact, my hearers, is one mode in which the human conscience testifies to the wisdom and necessity of being well prepared to meet a holy God. This universal habit has been forcibly brought to my attention in the present instance. With the religious character of the deceased I am wholly unacquainted. Of this I am not to speak. If evidences existed of true piety in his heart and life, most sincerely do I rejoice, praising God. But the fact of which I now speak, is the importance which is attached, in the judgment of all, to any acts, any expressions which indicate a religious turn of mind. Every thing else appears to be lost sight of in the presence of death. When the officers of state made official announcement of his decease, nothing was judged to be of greater importance to be told, than that his death was "calm and resigned." The fact that on entering the national mansion he had purchased a "Bible and Prayer-book," which, on the day of his interment, were placed beside his coffin—the fact that he signified to a religious attendant his purpose to connect himself with a christian church, on profession of his faith—why, my brethren, is so much interest attached to circumstances like these? Why do men, whether their own lives evince a regard to religion or not, speak of these facts as so very important? They are published—they are reported—they are the theme of conversation and inquiry. The reason is, as I have already said, that there is in the bosom of every man the consciousness that *true religion alone prepares any mortal to appear before the tribunal of God*. Nothing is more common than for the most irreligious, when death invades the circle of their nearest companionships, to make mention, as a matter of satisfaction, of every look, and act, and sign of the deceased, which evinced a preparation, on his part, for the great change. Every thing else loses its importance. When was it ever known, in these christian times, that the amount of a man's *possessions* was inscribed on his tomb-stone? The bare suggestion of such a thing would be construed as a mockery of death, under whose denuding hand the rich man leaveth the world naked as he entered it. But

if, in all his life, there was one virtue ; in his moral character, one trait which can afford satisfactory evidence of God's approval, this, be sure, you will find sculptured in conspicuous characters on his monumental marble ; and even there not half so deep, not half so imperishably, as on the hearts of surviving kindred.

One thing alone can prepare any for their last account. It is not rank, it is not honor, it is the belief and the practice of the Gospel of God. That which is highly esteemed among men, furnishes no passport to the presence of Divine Majesty. There is but one method of salvation proposed for any, for all. To be humble before God, is greater than to be exalted among men. To practice the duties of religion ; reverently to walk with God ; to be a penitent, sincere disciple of Jesus Christ ; this, the world themselves being judges, is of paramount consequence in the hour when death comes to terminate this earthly existence.

As an evidence of this, I have adverted rather to the convictions and admissions of men themselves, than to the explicit teachings of inspiration. When we open the word of God, the only thing which we find revealed therein, is our relation to a future and endless life. And the inquiry which the word and Spirit of God urge upon our consciences in view of death always is, am I myself prepared for the solemn transit ? Feeling as I do the propriety of these demonstrations of respect towards our chief magistracy, great is my fear amid it all, that outward show, the solemn pomp of sorrow, the requiem and the march, will divert the thoughts of many from those internal communings with death, judgment and eternity, which the visitations of Providence are adapted to create. And to-day, amid the thoughtfulness and calm of the holy Sabbath, I stand here to ask each one of my dear hearers whether he is himself prepared suddenly to be removed from the scenes which now absorb his attention to the solemnities of his final account. An impetuous current is fast bearing our bodies to the grave ; whither, whither are our spirits tending ? Is the great question decided or not, whether they have yet received a direction towards the city and the throne of God ? Has the sting of death, which is sin, been extracted ? Have we committed our souls unto the Conqueror of death and the grave ? Have we trusted in Him who is the resurrection and the life ? Have we fled for refuge and hope to Him who will occupy the throne of judgment, whose smile amid the world's convulsions will be life, whose frown will be despair and death ? A satisfactory answer to inquiries like these, can alone sustain and calm in the hour when the world recedes, and its glory fades on the rayless eye. To be a true christian is the only thing which will avail when the dead, small and great, shall stand before the throne of God, and the character of each awaits its irreversible destiny. What then, in the words of the Son of God, is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?

SERMON CCC.

BY REV. PROF. H. P. TAPPAN,
OF NEW-YORK.

**HUMAN AGENCY IN THE EVANGELIZATION
OF THE WORLD.**

One of the series on the Conversion of the World, delivered in the
Central Presb. Church, New-York.

*"Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I,
except some man should guide me?"—Acts, 8 : 30, 31.*

Four thousand years passed away after the fall of Adam before Jesus Christ appeared in our world. Why was his coming so long delayed? During this long period the oracles of God were confined to one small nation shut up within the mountain fastnesses of Palestine. Why were they not published universally? Eighteen hundred years have passed away since the advent of Jesus Christ: during this period gross darkness has not only overspread the greater part of the nations, but also the nominal and visible christian church; at the present day two-thirds of our race remain unevangelized; and even the so-called christian nations are not governed by christian principles; and what is still more sad and remarkable, the congregations and churches organized, and statedly meeting for christian worship, are, and profess to be, but in part converted to the spiritual dominion of Christ. Since God is omnipotent, and so benevolent as to be called "love" itself, why has he not expelled darkness and sin from the earth, and given a universal and complete triumph to the religion of the cross? If it be said that God has entrusted the work of evangelizing the nations to human agents, and they have proved unfaithful,—then the inquiry arises, Why has he entrusted it to such agents—why have not his benevolence and omnipotence united to speed the work by direct interpositions, or at least by adequate agencies?

There are two answers which may readily be given to these inquiries, according to the spirit in which they are made.

First, if they be made in the spirit of the unfaithful servant who was entrusted with the one talent, and refused to turn it to any profit, but went and hid it, because he believed his Lord to be an "aus-

tere man," and unjust in his requirements,—then we may reply, "out of thine own mouth" art thou answered and judged.

The facts which give rise to these inquiries, are facts which all alike admit; nay, they are facts which, if they involve difficulties, involve them in relation to natural religion as well as in relation to christianity; since natural religion, in affirming the omnipotence and benevolence of God, is also called upon to reconcile these difficulties with the palpable and continued ignorance, sinfulness and wretchedness of the world. If, then, either in relation to christianity or to natural religion, you are disposed to regard the Almighty as an austere being, and if you deem that he might have made a better world than the one in which he has placed us, or might have more speedily relieved it of the evils which oppress it, and that infinite benevolence must stand committed to such ends and endeavors; remember that the world is as it is, and that all speculations of this nature, and all murmurings against the constituted order of things will not alter them in the least degree; and that therefore the wisest course, on your own principles, will be to propitiate in the best way you can the favor of this infinite and dreaded Being; to discharge most exactly and perseveringly those duties of truth, mercy, and justice which he imperatively demands, and which are seconded by your own conscience; and especially if, notwithstanding all that may appear irreconcilable with perfect goodness, he has condescended to show to you in particular decisive marks of most gracious favor, it is both prudent and right to embrace these with an earnest and faithful heart, and to put them to a wise and reasonable use, that you at least may meet happily an account, to which it is not unjust that you should be called. What if the oracles of God were given anciently only to one small people, you do not live in the ages of this destitution. What if two-thirds of the world be yet without the Gospel, you have the Gospel. What if God do not by his omnipotence at once convert the world, and change the earth into a paradise of sinless and immortal beauty, you have made to you the plain and faithful offer of eternal life through Jesus Christ; you have the most excellent precepts of duty clearly laid down, and the promise of heavenly and most efficient aids and influences. To become a righteous man is the safest, wisest, and happiest course at all events. To become just such a character as Christ has expounded in his teaching, and exemplified in his life, is a glorious attainment. To devote yourself to those labors of benevolence which the Gospel imposes, will be a wise and useful life—ininitely better than the stale repetition of the pride, foolery, and sensuality of the world; it will be a twofold blessedness—blessing him that gives and him that takes; it will lead the soul gently and promisingly down to that dark grave which none can escape; and if there be a star of life and immortality to light up the dark cope of this world's gloom, and to guide us to the heaven we think and dream of, the rest which our wearied spirits long for, it is here—it is here! in the faith and the duties of the Gospel.

Secondly, if the inquirer be a meek and humble spirit, afflicted with suggestions offensive to his piety, then to such a spirit a relief will be most readily afforded, by pointing to the actual and indisputable indications of the divine goodness in the benign master-designs of nature, the beautiful movements of a watchful and faithful providence, and beyond all, in the mission of the Son of God. Whatever be the difficulties which exist, the goodness which does appear is so vast and peculiar that it is impossible to reconcile it with malevolence, or even with a divine nature austere and capricious. Besides, if we but view it aright, the very tendency in our minds to represent whatever in the order of the world appears to conflict with perfect goodness, as incompatible with the idea of God, does in reality form the most solid evidence that God cannot be otherwise than perfectly good, notwithstanding these apparent discrepancies. By supposition we look into nature, and with a critical eye we detect discrepancies; we look into the divine revelation, and with a critical eye we here also detect discrepancies. We remark, how can this, and this, exist under the government of an omnipotent and infinitely benevolent being? Can an omnipotent and perfectly good being permit the convulsions of nature, pestilence, and death? Can such a being allow sin to enter the world, or delay the advent of the Saviour four thousand years, or let the world remain unconverted for more than eighteen centuries after this advent, through the inefficiency and unfaithfulness of the agents to whom he has committed the trust of publishing the Gospel? But what does this questioning and this critical judgment imply? Have we then in our minds such a bright and transcendent idea of what God must be, that we can decide upon the order of nature, and the great moral movements unfolded in the Scriptures? Are we thus impelled by the very constitution of our being to demand in both, the realization of an archetype of infinite beauty and excellence, and to say of one form of creation, and one movement of providence, this is worthy of God; but of another form, and another movement to ask, How can this accord with perfect goodness united to omnipotence? And who gave us this elevated constitution of being, and kindled within us this bright and transcendent idea of what God must be? Surely it was God himself. Has he then revealed himself in the reason and conscience of man as he is and must be, and in creation and providence as he is not and cannot be? Has he given us the innate and necessary power of knowing him, only that in his works and in his moral administration we might be enabled to spy out his deficiencies and to see how unlike he is to himself? Has he constituted us merely to reverence and adore an idea, but to turn away in disappointment and sorrow from the reality? No, no, it cannot be; our earnest questionings respecting the apparent discrepancies in nature and in God's moral government, prove that we have within us the perfect idea of a perfect God; and from the very

constitution of the reason, as a faculty of the necessary and the absolute, God must be what reason affirms him to be. This inward teaching is God's own awful and melodious voice; the affirmation of the great I AM from the depths of the eternity which he inhabiteth, throwing its undulating notes into every mind in the widening circle of being. In the great truth affirmed here we cannot be mistaken. But we look out upon creation with eyes that observe only a few phenomena, and which do not pry into all the mysterious laws, agencies, and final causes of this stupendous nature: and we read the leaves of providence as a deep lore written in the language of heaven, wherein are revealed to us glimpses of a glorious signification and many clear and precious truths, but which nevertheless, in the introduction and the consecutive parts, has not yet been clearly construed in every passage, on account of its great reach of thought and its marvellous richness; and of which the peroration is reserved to be read in another world with eyes unbedimmed, when in the light of God we shall see light. God hath so made us that we can think of him only as infinitely wise and good, and we are ready to start up in alarm whenever anything presents itself which seems to conflict with this deep conviction; but when we reflect that the creation and the moral government in which we notice the discrepancy are His creation and government, we know that it must be only an appearance which, on account of the feebleness of our penetration, and the point of view at which we are placed, we are unable to explain. Our questionings and doubts respecting that which we see, can be accounted for only by admitting the great truth to exist in the reason which they appear to assail, and thus are self-destroyed, or rather are transmuted into a form of the most glorious and stable evidence. I doubt and question what I see, because I know most surely what God is; but the moment I reflect upon what he is, doubts and questionings cease, because what I see proceeds from him, and cannot be inconsistent with his nature. Thus may the meek and humble spirit repose peacefully on the convictions of its innermost and truest being, and bide its time until it shall know even as it is known.

But, nevertheless, it is not forbidden us to exercise all our powers of thought, and to avail ourselves of all the means of inquiry within our reach, to clear up, as far as we may, what is obscure; and that we may be enabled even now to see the bright footsteps of omnipotent love amid all the convulsions of nature, the conflicts and tumults of nations, the apparent delays of providence, and the feebleness of the appointed human instrumentalities.

I. One of the great principles in the ordering of the universe is that of PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT. No form of existence is presented at once complete and perfect. There are perfect elements of being and perfect laws, but not perfect and complete developments. The forms of vegetable life have their germination, their

budding, their flowers, their ripened fruit or seed, their stately and progressive growth : and when their decay comes on, it is but preparatory to a resurrection of new beauty without any interruption to the mysterious continuity of life. Analogous to this are the forms of animal existence : a feeble beginning, and a gradual growth and development of strength, beauty, and sagacity. By slow, secret, but sure processes, minerals are formed in the bowels of the earth. By the abrasion of rocks soils are collected, and barrenness is clothed with verdure, and waving forests spring up and become so ancient that no one can tell the story of their birth. The ocean gradually recedes from one continent and gradually approaches another, and the headlands and harbors of the ancient navigators are changed. In the ocean depths curious and minute operatives are busy, century after century, building up the coral caves and mountains, a fairy land of the watery world, and the stable foundations of future continents. Astronomy teaches us that in the wide and illimitable space nebulous matter is gradually concreting and forming into new worlds, and thus creation through endless ages is extending by processes which appear to us slow, but which are under sure laws. Geology has detected in our own globe signs which cannot be mistaken, indicating the gradual up-building of the crust on which we live, the formation of the mountains and the valleys, the rivers, lakes and oceans. God does not complete his works at once. The wonder, the beauty, and the glory of his skill appear in successive, and we may believe endless presentations of new forms of increasing perfection. In a given state and order of the world, for example, the earth as it has been prepared for man, the convenience and the beauty consist in successive changes. As we are constituted, one unchanging form of nature, even if it were a form of perfect beauty in itself, would pall upon us. We would not have all day and bright sunshine, but the quiet return of night with the soft light of moon and stars. We would not have the skies always fair, but sometimes veiled in the drapery of clouds, or quite shut out by falling showers. We would not have the fields always clothed with yellow harvests ; we love also the seed-time, and the first springing of the green blade. We would not have trees and shrubbery always loaded with beautiful buds, nor yet with opened fragrant flowers, nor yet with ripe fruit ; it is the orderly succession that we love. We would not have the atmosphere ever filled with loud piping winds, nor with gentle breezes, nor to lie in dead quietude ; they are all grateful in the succession in which they come to us. As it is with nature, so also is it with man. Infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, and even old age, whose hoary head is a crown of glory, are all beautiful forms of life. Would we prefer that men should be produced full grown and with ripened powers, and that there should be no infancy, no childhood ? With such a change it would seem to us that all the poetry and music of life had fled away. And the mind of man, the noblest of all God's creations,

how feeble and void at our beginning ! We have not at once our fully-developed capacities, and all possible knowledge ; but the mind strengthens and knowledge increases by slow degrees, with much pains-taking, from the budding-time of intellect and the simplest elements of learning. Were it not so, the dignity and excellence of mental discipline would be unknown ; mind would not be presented under its different interesting phases of an upward growth ; it would have no self-conscious strength in struggling onward in its own development ; and by the supposition being created at once in its full and perfect form, there would not be the prospect and the aim of an immortal progression, nor the sublime stimulus to self-exertion derived from such a prospect. Every given state both of organized matter and of the immortal mind has its beauty, its fitness, and its benign end to answer ; but it is still relatively imperfect, and its relative imperfection is the condition of a higher growth. Nothing is fixed and stolid, but all is moving in cycles of ever-varying beauty and uses, or is born into new dignities and powers.

The beginning and progress of philosophy, science and art furnish other illustrations. The world is presented to man subject to his observation and thought, his invention and appropriation. In his mind are the innate capacities which meet the world harmoniously, pre-constituted to know its laws and agencies, and to perfect its forms and materials. But no philosophy, or science, or art are revealed to him, he must work them all out for himself. And he has gloriously worked them out for himself. He has obeyed the powers of intellect wherewith God endowed him, he has used the world of which God made him the proprietor. God gave him neither his powers perfect, nor the world perfect ; but God designed that by his own endeavors he should do much to perfect both ; and hence we have profound philosophies and diverse and glorious sciences of the heavens and the earth, and multifarious arts of utility and beauty ; so that the ancient world of man in his infancy, has become the altered world of man in the marvellous growth and outstretching of his powers. We have here, then, in the actual world a development of material forms and a progress of material perfection by natural agents and laws working onward by a graduated process ; and a development of mind and the birth and growth of knowledges and arts, by the free and intellectual activities of man through successive centuries ; and by these free and intellectual activities we have nature herself modified and perfected—for architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and landscape-gardening, are all improvements upon the beauty of nature ; and we have the world filled with accommodations and comforts which did not before exist, through the useful arts which man has invented. And since government and law have been instituted by man under various forms and in various degrees of perfection, and the labors of the legislator and the philosopher have thrown more and more light upon the

first principles of social order, and the influences and the glory of science and art belong likewise to national destiny and character, the progress of the individual is but a type of the progress of nations.

Had all things at the first been made perfect by God, the whole order of the universe would have been reversed; and who will dare affirm that the order which would then have existed would have been wiser and more benign? Both nature and mind would have exhibited a fixed and rigid splendor and majesty. There would have been no history of the past, and no anticipation of the future, nothing to call forth activity, or to charm into being the visions of hope; there would have been no changing forms of beauty, but uniformity would sternly have reigned alone.

But it is not possible that either in matter or in created mind absolute perfection could ever exist, for absolute perfection can belong only to the infinite and eternal. If, therefore, progression were banished from the world, there would be a fixed form of imperfection without the possibility of improvement; for however beautiful and majestic a form of nature might be given, and however elevated and rich in gifts the form of mind selected for creation,—relatively to still higher ideas of beauty, greatness, and excellence, which could not but exist in the divine mind and admit of an actual development, the selected form would still be imperfect. A finite creation by an infinite Creator, and regulated by his laws, and under his watchful superintendence, must necessarily admit of indefinite and endless progression, ever giving new exhibitions of his wisdom and benignity. And such is the creation in which we live, and of which we form a part. A creation evidently on a scale more magnificent than one cast in a fixed and unchanging mould; for however magnificent the fixed and unchanging creation supposed might be, it would at length be far surpassed by the creation of progressing beauty and perfection, even although this last should have the most feeble and imperfect beginning.

Now it is perfectly plain that all objections made against the actual order of the world, and the actual movements of divine Providence, are really a demanding of God, why he did not begin the progressive movements which reign throughout his creation at a point of higher perfection, or why the succession is not more rapid? The presumption of such a demand cannot fail to strike every thinking and reverential mind. The great Architect and Governor knew best where to begin, and how rapidly to conduct the movement. The beauty and the wisdom which are palpable ought to beget child-like trustfulness with respect to what is yet hidden in his unfathomable counsels. Such objections and speculations are an abuse of the high powers wherewith he has endowed us. He has enabled us to see that all things are progressive, and to conceive of more perfect worlds and more perfect beings, not that we may find fault with that which is, but

that we may look forward joyfully and hopefully to that which is yet to come, and strive together in our free activities for its attainment.

Now I ask whether the developments of God's moral government, and the bestowment of high spiritual gifts and privileges, may not justly come under the principle of progression? And whether, in relation to his moral improvement and well-being, man may not justly be thrown upon his own free agency, as well as in relation to philosophy, science, and art? Had man never fallen, there would have been to every mind the same obvious propriety and fitness, and indeed necessity of a progressive moral improvement, as of a progressive intellectual improvement. But the inquiry which now troubles many, is the existence of sin itself, and the fact that it has been suffered to reign in the world for so many centuries. With regard to the existence of sin itself, let us at once relieve our minds from all painful inquiries by the reflection that it is an incidental evil. God, in imparting to man the high gift of freedom, made it possible for him to sin; nor could he have prevented him from sinning, but by infringing upon his free agency. Man chose to sin, and God in his wisdom suffered man to act out his free agency without interruption. Sin entered the world by the free act of man—he is its author. God in no wise can be the author of sin. The Bible thus represents the fact in the utmost simplicity, and then leaves it without comment or curious speculation—and there it is wisest for us to leave it. Now it appears from the Scriptures, that no sooner had man sinned than God began to develop a gracious system of measures for the removal of the evil and the final redemption of man.—The element of depravity had been lodged in the species by a law we are constrained to believe, not arbitrary, but lying in the most intimate constitution of our being, and this element brought forth its sad fruits in the whole history of man, while at the same time all the constitutive faculties of his being were showing their characteristics, their force, and their direction, in civilization, education, and refinement. God's gracious measures met the element of depravity. The general elevation of the race was progressive: the working of the element of depravity was progressive likewise: and there appeared together the most splendid forms of intellectual greatness, and the most loathsome forms of moral defilement. The gracious interpositions of God were made on the same great principle—they were progressive, as the progressive developments of humanity called for them; and they did not set aside, but stimulated the free activity of man to its highest and noblest exertion. From the beginning God clearly revealed himself, and made salvation possible, and vouchsafed the most kindly converse of heavenly visitors, and even spake himself in a paternal voice to those who sought him sincerely and devoutly. Twice he revealed himself

to the whole race,—at the creation and at the deluge, and continually sent his prophets among men. And it was not until the nations at large had been amply tried, that he selected one man to become the father of one distinct people, and gave them to have their compact and wonderful institutions among the rocks and mountain streams of Canaan, that they might be the conservatories of his oracles, not for themselves merely, but for the world, until the times appointed should be fulfilled.

The advent of the Saviour was placed not at the beginning of the world, nor yet at the end; but midway in the track of the successive generations. Had it been placed at the beginning, it would have met man in his feeblest development, it would have gained imperfect records, and might have appeared to the after generations as a dim and uncertain history of a remote antiquity. Had it been delayed until the end of the world, it would not have impressed itself deeply upon the advancement of society, and faith might have sickened in the long expectation. But placed midway, it burst upon the world when the experiment of almost every religion and every philosophy had been made for the moral elevation of man, and made in vain; when conquest was sated and universal dominion consolidated; when civilization was advanced, and learning and the arts had attained a proud eminence; when there was a general pause in the tumults of the nations; when there were abundant materials for it to operate upon, and the way was prepared for making its enduring records in books, and on the monuments of art, and for diffusing itself through all the elements and interests of society. It was placed at the point where it could collect around it the mighty energies of a progressing humanity, and shape them to new ends and higher destinies; where it could appropriate the arts and discoveries which had already attained a high perfection, and become the patron of still more signal triumphs of the human mind; and lastly, it was placed where a prospective and a retrospective faith could meet under similar advantages, and where old prophecies would be fulfilled in attestation of its validity, and new prophecies be given to serve by their fulfilment in after ages, the same end. Is it possible to conceive of a period in the long march of humanity more auspicious to the introduction of christianity, than the period when Christ actually appeared?

Since the advent, the destinies of man and the movements of christianity have again faithfully exhibited the phases of the great principle of progression. Christianity was indeed introduced by miracles, by signs and wonders, and there was a reason for this supernatural display: but ever since there have been no sudden movements and no extraordinary indications: there have been all the activities of man at work for good and ill as from the beginning, but on wider spheres and with more stupendous results; while christianity, with a divine power indeed, but un-

der laws which ever respect the constitution of the human mind and the condition of society, has been permeating the whole mass, and leading on with various success, by slow degrees, but with sure aim, her final and universal triumph. Nature has been progressing. Philosophy, science, and art have been progressing. The general development of humanity and the destinies of nations have been progressing: and with all, and in some sense in all, christianity, containing the higher life and the ultimate end of all, has been progressing likewise. When the grand consummation shall arrive, we shall have a more glorious, serene, and beautiful nature—there will be “a new heaven and a new earth;” a peaceful ordering of the nations—“nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;” a glorious diffusion of the truth, for we shall “walk in the light of the Lord;” and the universal reign of righteousness, love and blessedness—“There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face.” Such is the universal constitution of the divine government, and it is wise, beautiful, and benign throughout.

II. Another great principle of the Divine government, which we now proceed to notice, is the employment of fixed, definite, and appropriate agencies for the accomplishment of its ends. These agencies are two-fold: they are natural, necessitated and irresponsible; or they are intellectual, free and responsible.

By natural agencies the planets are impelled and guided in their revolutions; the seasons are led through their circuit; day and night are given; animal and vegetable productions are sustained and multiplied; and the whole economy of nature harmoniously and bountifully ordered. The laws which God has ordained are rigidly observed. The velocities of the planets are not changed. No new power is substituted for gravitation. The force of wind, steam, lightning, and floods remains the same. There is no vacillation, no hurry, and no delay; but the great progression of nature is led on by the powers, and according to the laws which His wisdom assigned to this department of His universe. Every agent has its characteristics, and its sphere in which to operate. Now were God frequently to set aside these natural agencies by direct interpositions, he would exhibit himself either as capricious in his determinations, or as miscalculating in his plans. He does indeed sometimes interpose and suspend a law of nature, or produce effects beyond the reach of these laws; but these are *miracles* or *wonders*, extraordinary and unlooked for, and introduced not for the perfecting of his system of nature, but for the accomplishment of some great moral end. The wisdom, majesty and goodness of God in nature, are displayed in the uniformity of the great elements, forces, and laws which he originally appointed, and in the unbroken system which he maintains.

The same adherence to his original appointments appears in the moral world. God has appointed no natural agents to institute government and laws among men, to invent arts, to perfect the sciences, to communicate knowledge to the human mind, and to carry on, in general, the progression of humanity; neither has he appointed any supernatural agents to do these; nor yet does he step forth to do these by the immediate exertion of his own omnipotence: these are the appropriate and the appointed work of man alone, just as the various movements and developments of nature are the appropriate and appointed work of natural agents alone. Now it is evident, that the propagation of christianity lies fully and fairly within the domain of human agency. The arts of printing and navigation, of propulsion by steam, of making roads and bridges, and of course the arts of working in various metals, and of manufacturing paper and other materials, the cultivation of mathematics, mechanics, astronomy, chemistry, and natural science in general, are all necessary subsidiaries. So also the translation of the Bible, of Tracts, and kindred books into various languages, the institution of schools, and the instruction of men in reading and other branches of learning, and last of all, the preaching of the Gospel, are all plain and indispensable means of evangelizing the world.

Whatever spiritual influences God vouchsafes, these influences do not remove the necessity of the various applications of the appointed human agencies.

Now, one may ask, why does not God reveal at once the sciences and arts necessary to the spread of the Gospel; or why does he not employ angels instead of men to teach the ignorant and preach the Gospel? Indeed, it is not necessary to stop here, but we may at once advance to the inquiry, Why does not God, by a signal and inevitable act of his omnipotence, without delay, enlighten and convert all the nations? But is it not plain, that all such inquiries imply that God, after having ordained a great system of secondary powers and agencies with their appropriate spheres—agencies ordained for the very purpose of accomplishing certain ends, should, under certain emergencies, set them all aside, and become himself the universal and only agent? thus capriciously making and unmaking—adopting plans and systems, and nullifying them—calling agents into being, and reducing them to non-entity. As well might we ask, Why did God make worlds, and moral and natural agents? Why did he exert his creative powers at all, and not dwell in the eternal solitude of his own infinite being? The very fact of creation involves the idea of constituted powers and agencies, of regulated systems and processes, of progressive movements, and of phenomena mediately produced. Nor would the absurdity of such inquiries be obviated by admitting the wisdom of allowing the natural agents to move on in an unimpeded course, and thus preserving the integrity of

the original design of nature ; but requiring, that, in respect of the welfare of moral beings, the ordinary secondary agencies should be overleaped by supernatural agencies which should more rapidly and effectually secure the aims of benevolence—for the moral agencies are the higher of the two, and form the most glorious displays of the divine wisdom ; and it is just here that God may be conceived to be most deeply interested in maintaining the full and uninterrupted progression and development of his great original plans. Besides, the very idea of a constituted moral agency forbids such a supplanting of the human by the divine. A moral agent is a free agent. It is his freedom which essentially makes him moral or responsible. But the communication of such a high gift, of a trust so momentous, pre-supposes that it shall not be interfered with ; for the agent loses his responsibility the moment the acts, for which he has been held responsible, are taken out of the sphere of his own causality and made the appropriate effects of another cause. Thus the whole form and character of the moral world would be changed, and it would become absurd to speak any more of the dignity, worth, and interests of moral beings. If God cannot subserve the interests of moral beings without nullifying their proper agency, then he is presented in the light of making a bold and hazardous experiment, and after conducting it to a certain point, becoming suddenly alarmed, and preventing any farther development by crushing together the co-working elements into a confused mass, and recalling into the repose of his own nature all the energies and laws which he had given out. But we cannot make such an unworthy supposition. No, no, we have a nobler order in the universe of God ! He has ordained his natural agents—given them their scope, their distinct potentialities, and linked them to their proper phenomena ; and here we have the harmony, beauty, and goodness of the great system of nature. He has likewise ordained his moral agents a higher and nobler order of agents, because made after his own likeness in intelligence and the power of choice. These have also their scope and potentialities, and have arrayed before them what they may and *ought* to do ; duties which they may neglect and violate, and so incur guilt and condemnation ; or in the faithful performance of which they may meet with immortal rewards. That which the natural agents are commissioned to do, is done by them and not by other agencies. That which the moral agents are commissioned to do is done by them, and not by other agencies. This is the order of the universe. And now we see that in relation to the moral agents, while God gives them a noble sphere of labor, and provides them with abundant and apt materials, and ministers to them every requisite influence, and implants within their own being the first principles of all truth, and the constitutive forms of every possible knowledge, they are required to go

forth to the inventions of art, the discoveries of science, the constitution of government, the cultivation of the earth, the institutions of learning—to all that is possible for the development of mind, and the elevation and improvement of the race. Christianity takes her place among the other objects of human activity. As God provided the world with all the suitable means and appliances for a successful and productive industry, so also has he provided christianity with all her heavenly revelations, her gracious and supernatural aids, and her sublime and immortal prospects, for all the higher and spiritual energies of our being. Redemption from sin and eternal life are made possible to every individual in the atonement of Christ and the mission of the Spirit; but then they are actually attained only through the activity of the free moral agent himself, working out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The deliverance of the whole race from the guilt of sin, and the element of depravity in the human nature, a universal diffusion of spiritual knowledge, a universal elevation, refinement, and sanctification, the transformation of the world into a region of love, peace, and blessedness, are embraced within the scope of christianity; but then men are the appropriate agents appointed to open communications between the most distant nations; to translate books into different languages; to instruct ignorant men, and to carry and preach the Gospel to the destitute. The order, harmony, and fitness of the moral constitution of the universe clearly assigns this to human agents. God, in his highest heavens, is doing his own appropriate work, and is co-working in all the subordinate powers and agencies which he has ordained. He has assigned to the heavenly hierarchies, the Cherubim and Seraphim, their appropriate work. He has assigned the great physical powers their appropriate work. He has also given to man his appropriate work; and here it lies—our field is the world. The purification and redemption of our being; the development and redemption of our whole race—this is our work. God does not step down from his high throne to do directly, by his own omnipotence, what he has appointed the angels to do; nor does he remove out of the order of his physical agents what his wisdom at first assigned to their laws and forces; neither does he descend to earth to take out of our hands those great labors of benevolence which fitly belong to us, and thus give us an opportunity to repose in indolence, or to pursue freely the peurile plans of our own pride, sensuality, and covetousness. His wisdom and benevolence are displayed in the orders of agencies which he has ordained, and the sublime and glorious ends which are actually accomplished by, or are made possible to those agencies. It was wisdom and benevolence to give us these high capacities, and to place us in a world so richly furnished: ours is the folly and the guilt, if science and the arts remain hidden, and the earth lie unimproved under our

hands. It was wisdom and benevolence to reveal life and immortality through the cross of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit : ours is the folly and the guilt, if we who have received the heavenly mission do not avail ourselves of it for our own salvation, and do not speed it on its way among all the people and kindreds of the earth. It is not for us to ask, Why does not Omnipotence and infinite benevolence at once accomplish its work ? Omnipotence and infinite benevolence has accomplished its work. It is we that are dilatory ; it is we that refuse or delay to do our work—that most honorable and sublime work to which we are fitted and called in this grand order of the universe. God has provided us the light by which to see, and shall we now close our eyes and call upon omnipotent benevolence to produce directly in our minds the phenomena of vision ? God has made us capable, by industry and thoughtfulness, of improving our condition, and providing on every hand comfort and convenience ; and shall we fold our hands and call upon God to work miracles in order to save us from the necessity of exertion ? God has brought us salvation by the sacrifice of his Son, and instead of laying hold upon it eagerly and joyfully, shall we yield ourselves to indifference and worldliness, and wait for his omnipotence and benevolence to lead us to the cross by a miraculous compulsion ? God has put the Gospel into our hands as his honored almoners, and he commands us to give it to all nations ; and shall we each one begin to make excuse, and turn away to our pleasures, our schemes of ambition and covetousness, and dream away this short but momentous life, and reply to the divine command, “ Lord, cannot thine own omnipotence and love do this work at once, and save us the toil, the anxiety, and the self-denial ? ” Yes, he could do the work, but then why are we made moral agents ? what is our being worth ? what place do we hold ? what end do we answer in God’s creation, and why are we placed under such high appointments ? He could do the work, but the doing of it would imply the annihilation of our moral nature, and involve our utter worthlessness, and our unworthiness of such a high interposition. God is continually exerting his agency in our behalf ; ten thousand are his secret and benign ministrations, like the falling drops of dew, and he has made, and is making for us stupendous interpositions of grace. But there is one point where in the harmony and perfection of his universal order he must pause, or he would violate that order, and that is, where to interpose would be to infringe upon or set aside the moral agency which he ordained as the pre-eminent glory of his creation.

III. There is yet another point of view in which this subject is to be placed. The progressive development and perfection of our being is the great and benign end which God contemplates in respect to man. “ Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

Now the developments and virtues to which we may attain, lose at once their distinctive characteristics, and their high and peculiar value, the moment they are conceived of as the necessary product of foreign agencies, and not of our own inner and responsible being. The arts and sciences, whether arrived at by our own invention and observations, or acquired from others, derive their value not merely from the conveniences, enjoyments, and knowledge with which they furnish us,—they derive their highest and most lasting value from the fact that their attainment involves the permanent enlargement and cultivation of our mental faculties. These arts and sciences known in this infancy of our being, will appear but as elementary and limited acquisitions in the future glory of our being. But they have a most important bearing upon those high energies and the wide range of knowledge prospectively opening upon us. In the efforts of the intellect to know and comprehend, it becomes more apt and vigorous to know and comprehend, and thus becomes prepared for yet higher and higher knowledges, and those sublime exertions of thought which belong to a nobler state. Thus do we know ourselves and feel our strength, and plume our wings for a heavenward flight.

But yet more strikingly does this principle appear in the moral virtues. Benevolence, justice, and truth are not mere contemplations and speculations. They imply and demand in their several relations, voluntary and persevering exertions. In order to be holy—to be God-like—to be prepared for the fellowship and enjoyments of the heavenly state, these virtues under their various modifications must be inwrought, and pervade our whole moral being as delightful, congenial and habitual inspirations. And these cardinal and all-comprehending virtues are of such a nature that they can never limit themselves within a given number of objects, or within certain times. Wherever and whenever the objects and occasions of truth, justice, and benevolence appear, there must we voluntarily and cheerfully exert ourselves in administering these virtues. Had we spent ages in the practice of these virtues, we should not be relieved in the least degree from the obligation to exert ourselves to the utmost, whenever new objects and occasions should appear. Now in forming for ourselves a holy character in a world like ours, we cannot escape from the multifarious duties which are opened to us on all sides in the ignorance, the sinfulness, and miseries which abound. In a less wretched world, less would be demanded; but it is the condition of all virtue to answer the demands which are actually made.

What a sphere of moral discipline is then afforded in our world! Whatever be the origin of the wretchedness of our world, for all the purposes of moral discipline, it is enough for us that it exists. Whether omnipotent goodness might not con-

sistently relieve it without delay, is a mere speculation. But that we are bound to exert our moral agency in relation to all the forms of evil presented, is an unquestionable truth resulting from the very nature of virtue itself. Sin and sorrow have made this world their home, and he that goes forth as the minister of mercy will be subjected to severe labors; but they are labors which, while outwardly sowing good seed abroad in the wide field, are nourishing in the soul all the springs of spiritual vitality and blessedness. There is no form of virtue but what is called forth into activity by the state of our world. There is, therefore, in God's universe probably no school of virtue so richly prepared for the purposes of the highest discipline which can be imposed upon the soul. From a cup of cold water given to a forlorn and forsaken wretch, to the sublime charity which aims to spread the Gospel like the morning light over the darkened world, lie the gradations of the benevolence which are here marked out to us. Every day, every hour, every place gives its opportunities, reveals its duties, teaches its lessons, and may enable us to take another step upon the golden ladder which reaches to the skies. Such a world is peculiarly fitted as the pilgrimage of a sinner struggling after redemption, and the possession of the divine life. All evil passions rankle by nature in these bosoms of ours: but this is a world in which we may learn to bear sorrow with patience, to forgive injuries and to bless our enemies, to repress pride and envy, to deny our lusts, to do good even to the unthankful, and to live a life of godliness for the sake of its pure and unrewarded excellence. It is in this world that it can be said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit,—blessed are they that mourn,—blessed are the meek,—blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness,—blessed are the merciful,—blessed are the pure in heart,—blessed are the peace-makers,—blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake;" for it is in this world that the spirit is so tried and disciplined as to find blessedness in all these: and if it find blessedness in these, then hath it within itself the well of living waters springing up unto everlasting life.

But the discipline of the soul in relation to God is provided for in the state of our world, no less than in relation to man. Had God relieved man from all scientific investigation by directly revealing to him the constitution of his own being and of the world, man could not have manifested that earnest passion for knowledge which is implied in those voluntary labors by which he now travels upwards to the sun-lit pinnacles of truth: and so also, had He relieved him from all toilsome inquiry, and the possibility of doubt, in respect to the Divine nature and government, and the mediatorial system, that most worthy and sublime desire to know God and "the invisible things of Him," and that noble faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen" would not

have been developed. God has made us capable of knowing him, and he has presented the world and the mediatorial system to us under such forms and signatures, that we need not fail of attaining a clear conviction of what He is, and a most blissful assurance of his favor; but the attainment requires a meek, trustful, reverential, truth-loving spirit, a deep and serious tendency to the pure and the divine, a supreme appreciation of the spiritual, an intense longing after God and immortality, and a diligent, wise and persevering application of our best powers. It is meet that beings constituted as we are, should exert ourselves to collect all the scattered rays of the divine light, and thus struggle onward from dim perceptions to a perfect vision, and then will the perfect vision be most fully enjoyed, because we loved at the beginning the most feeble rays. There is nothing better or clearer in the world than christianity, and he that will not receive it, because it is not good and clear enough to satisfy the demands of his intelligence, hath neither the meek wisdom of the true philosopher, nor the reverential and earnest love that feeleth after God, if haply it may find him. It is with duty as it is with knowledge and faith. God has not commanded us to the duties laid down in the Gospel by an audible voice spoken to each one of us: the duties are addressed to our hearts and consciences. There surely is no higher form of benevolence possible, in our world, than that which forms the great aim of christianity. To perform these duties, even if they should prove a misconception of the divine will, would show such an attachment to that exalted moral excellence which cannot but enter into the divine character, and such a sincere spirit of obedience, that the misconception could not but be shielded by the principle which attended it. It would be far wiser and better to run the risk of mistaking a particular duty, than never to call into action the most essential principle of virtue. Such, then, is the state of our world, and such our position in it under the Gospel, that we can give the most decided proof of a disposition truly to know God, and faithfully to do what is pleasing in his sight. Whatever doubtfulness may surround us forms but a noble discipline of the intellect and the heart. And how amply shall we be repaid at the last, if we find that the doubtfulness was only that which always attends the incipient efforts of the mind in seeking after all knowledge, and which faded away as we perseveringly moved onward, examining and thinking seriously and candidly and with fervent hope, and doing righteousness and mercy in pure love, until, arrived at the full stature of our being, we are prepared to see God and to hear his voice!

It is a beautiful economy which thus unites our highest duties to God and man with the cultivation of the highest principles of our nature. We cannot win heaven without becoming heavenly. But we cannot become heavenly without leading our fellow-men to heaven. We cannot be the children of God unless we love him and confide in him; but this child-like spirit becomes most deeply inwrought, and

honors God most when it appears fervent and cheerful and ready to obey, in the darkness as well as in the light, and soweth now in tears for the glorious harvest which is to come.

Shall we ask now, why the redemption of this world is so far committed to human agency? How rich, and clear, and abundant are the answers! Human agency is the fitting, congenial, directly effective, and the wisely appointed agency in the grand order of the world. Human agency accords with the great principle of progression which reigns through the wide universe of infinite wisdom. Human agency in this work, while it is fitting in relation to its objects, is no less fitting in relation to its actors, and proposes the discipline required for the formation of the character prescribed under the kingdom of heaven.

And again, barring all other considerations and inquiries, such is the nature of truth, justice, and benevolence—the cardinal virtues,—that they must apply themselves to their appropriate work, wherever the objects and occasions are presented. Without stopping to inquire into other methods of relieving the world or seeking for higher agencies, if we are good men, or if we would be good men, we must teach the ignorant, comfort the broken-hearted, and proclaim the Gospel to the lost, wherever we find them. It is our work, simply because it falls within our path. This will for ever be true; and in whatever part of God's universe we may be called to reside, the great principles involved will be binding upon us.

In committing the propagation of the Gospel to human agencies, God has not debarred any individuals or any age from its possession. For in every age the great truths of salvation have been proclaimed in the world; and men either would not go to the fountains which were opened, or when committed with the great trust of publishing it to all nations, they have failed to fulfil it. Twelve poor fishermen did more to realize the command of Christ than the nominal christian world have ever done beside.

It is time that we wake up to the magnitude and reality of this trust. **THE GOSPEL IS TO BE GIVEN TO THE WORLD BY HUMAN AGENCY.** When will it be accomplished? It will be accomplished when those who now have the Gospel do their duty. It might be done now. The Gospel is always attended with the same promises and spiritual influences, and prayer is always heard by the prayer-hearing God. The great failure has been in action. Has there not been failure in prayer? Yes—but men will never pray for the conversion of the world effectually and fervently, except as they are actually engaged in propagating the Gospel. Prayer supposes the intensest fervor of the soul, and this fervor will contentedly leave nothing undone that ought to be done. But have not the prophecies pointed ever to remote times when speaking of the conversion of the world? Prophecy is not the rule of duty, this rule is found in the plain command of Christ. Divine Wisdom, it may

be presumed, has intentionally thrown a sublime mystery over prophecy, lest it should be assumed as a rule of duty. The interpreters of prophecy, however, have not generally placed the grand consummation remote from their own times. The language is so peculiar as ever to have induced the impression "The Lord is at hand"—and indeed the Lord has ever been at hand. Looking at the power of the Gospel, looking at the promises, looking at what we are called to do, we are justified in affirming that the redemption of the world has been delayed by the dilatoriness and unfaithfulness of the human agents; and that the great consummation might have taken place centuries past but for this.

Prophecy as now interpreted, (and it seems more wisely interpreted now than ever,) lends us nothing but encouragement. But I repeat again, the prophecies are not our guide in this matter. Our great work is not the interpretation of prophecy, although this is a work great in itself: nor does our work mainly lie in profound speculations, although these be also demanded in their place. Our work is to preach the Gospel to every creature—by the press; by oral teachers, by Bibles, by Tracts, by schools, by every available means to spread abroad the word of God, the glad news of salvation. Some are prone to look for extraordinary signs in the heavens and in the earth,—extraordinary manifestations of divine power resistlessly bringing in the nations. But this never has been, and I believe never will be the mode of divine operations. It does not accord with the great order ordained in the universe. God has already revealed the power which is to convert the nations—this power lies in and accompanies the Gospel. No less surely has he revealed the agency required, and that is the agency of devoted men.

In the progression of divine providence, in the onward developments of art, science and civilization, we have arrived at a period most favorable for the accomplishment of the great work so long delayed. The most distant nations are accessible. Communication between nations once unknown to each other has become easy and rapid. The cheapness and rapidity with which books can be multiplied are unexampled. The most civilized and nominally christian nations rule the earth. The Bible is already translated into the most important languages of the world. The way is already prepared—the achievement is evidently within our grasp—the evangelization of the world is not a dream—it need be no longer delayed. O if we would but believe that it is for this we live, and for this alone—namely, the work of the Lord; that our being is worthless and without dignity but for this—namely, that we are God's servants; then would we arouse and do his bidding, and be no longer the poor fools of time.